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ABSTRACT

Studies of nearly a dozen welfare programs were reviewed to determine the effects of welfare policies on children and youth and to identify issues requiring consideration during reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. The following were among the key findings: (1) the school achievement of elementary school-age children are improved by welfare programs that increase both parental employment and income by providing earnings supplements to welfare recipients when they go to work; (2) programs that mandate participation in employment-related services typically increase parental employment but not income and have few short- or long-term effects on elementary school-age children; (3) although time-limited welfare programs can be implemented in ways that avoid widespread harm for elementary school-age children, the combination of earnings supplements with short time limits on welfare may reduce the positive effects that such supplements bring to children; (4) adolescents' school achievement and progress have been negatively affected by their parents' participation in both voluntary and mandatory programs promoting work and programs with and without time limits on benefit receipt; and (5) some evidence suggests that the observed negative effects on adolescents

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result from "child care problems" associated with maternal employment.
(Contains 11 endnotes and 6 references.) (MN)

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Reauthorization
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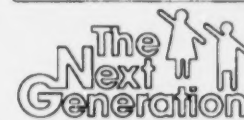
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Welfare Policies Matter for Children and Youth

Lessons for TANF Reauthorization



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Pamela Morris, Lisa A. Gennetian, and Virginia Knox

SUMMARY

THIS policy brief deepens our understanding of how changes in welfare policies affect the well-being of elementary school-age and adolescent children by showing how reforms targeted at parents can have important consequences for their children. Specifically, the findings reported here demonstrate that welfare policies that aim to improve the economic security of families can benefit elementary school-age children and can complement school-based interventions by giving children a better start in their education. For adolescents, the results suggest that policies that increase parental employment can have negative effects on school achievement, suggesting a new reason for policymakers to spur efforts to develop more flexible child care as well as strategies that can effectively engage low-income youth and help them move successfully into adulthood.

Building on a synthesis of random assignment studies that evaluated nearly a dozen programs,¹ this brief incorporates new long-term results from the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS) and the Canadian Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP), as well as just released findings from Connecticut's Jobs First program, to explore the effects of welfare and work policies on elementary school-age children. For adolescents, this brief reports emerging findings from syntheses of eight studies that evaluate the effects on adolescents of 16 programs that aimed to increase the self-sufficiency of low-income parents.²

Key findings:

- Programs that increase both parental employment and income by providing a supplement to the earnings of welfare recipients when they go to work improve the school achievement of their *elementary school-age children*. In the one study for which longer-term follow-up results are newly available, these benefits to children have persisted four-and-a-half years.
- Programs that mandate participation in employment-related services (including job search, education, and skills training)

typically increase parental employment but not income and have few effects on *elementary school-age children* through five years of follow-up. These long-term results reinforce those previously drawn from shorter-run data about the effects of programs with mandatory employment services.

- Results from two studies indicate that time-limited welfare programs can be implemented in ways that avoid widespread harm for *elementary school-age children*. At the same time, combining earnings supplements with short time limits on welfare may reduce the positive effects such supplements bring to children.
- In both voluntary and mandatory programs that promote work and programs with and without time limits on benefit receipt, *adolescents'* school achievement and progress have been negatively affected by their parents' participation in welfare and employment programs. The programs, on average, have no effects on suspensions, school dropout, or childbearing, nor do they appear to affect the school completion of older adolescents as they enter young adulthood. Although average effects are small, increases in maternal employment may be adding to the challenges faced by an already disadvantaged group of adolescents.
- There is some evidence indicating that these negative effects on *adolescents* are a result of the "child care problem" associated with maternal employment. Not only may adolescents have been left unsupervised as their parents increased their employment, but they also appear to be caring for younger siblings and working more than part time.
- For *infants and toddlers*, data are too limited to permit definitive conclusions. Information from two studies — one of a program with earnings supplements and the other of a program with mandatory employment services — reveals little evidence of either harm or benefit to younger children's development.

INTRODUCTION

Policy makers are now taking stock of the nation's five years of experience with welfare reform following the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). As the longer-term effects of this profound social experiment are assessed, one of the most important benchmarks by which the new system will be judged is whether it is helping the children of welfare recipients to develop into healthy, competent young adults. Fortunately, those who will chart welfare

reform's next phase have a body of evidence to guide them. A generation of rigorous studies launched prior to the 1996 reform legislation is now available, and as this review makes clear, the results are robust and compelling.

Because all of these studies began prior to the 1996 shift from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and because they do not reflect every welfare reform policy that states have implemented, they cannot answer the question, "Overall, how has welfare

reform affected children?" However, the studies discussed here can answer two vitally important questions for decision makers as they look forward:

- Which welfare reform strategies have proven to be especially beneficial or harmful to children and adolescents?
- How can the TANF system be adapted to reduce the disadvantages that low-income children and adolescents face?

FINDINGS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Examining the short- and longer-term effects on children of 12 welfare experiments aimed at increasing the self-sufficiency of low-income parents, it is clear that the way states design their welfare reform programs can affect not only the economic security of parents but the well-being of children as well. This conclusion emerges by comparing the effects of three broad policy approaches that are currently used in many state welfare programs. Four *earnings supplement programs* were designed to make work more financially rewarding, by providing families with monthly cash supplements or by increasing the amount of welfare that recipients could keep when they went to work. Six other programs, referred to here as *mandatory employment services programs*, obligated welfare recipients to participate in such activities as education, training, and immediate job search as a condition for maintaining their welfare eligibility. The designs of the remaining two *time-limited programs* imposed state caps on how long welfare benefits could be received. (For additional information about the programs and results summarized here, see the references on page 7.) All of these programs were evaluated using a random assignment design that assigns families to program and control groups by a lottery-like process. This research method provides a rigorous test of the programs' effects, or *impacts*, on adults and children.

To make results comparable across studies, program impacts were examined for children who were between approximately age 3 (preschool age) and age 9 (early elementary school age) when the programs began and whose single parents were receiving welfare. Initial follow-up interviews were conducted as early as 2 years later, when these same children would all be in elementary school and were between approximately age 5 and age 12. In two studies, further interviews were conducted between 4.5 and 5 years later with mothers of the younger children in the initial study populations. At the time these longer-term follow-up interviews took place, the children were all in elementary school and between age 7.5 and age 10.

Earnings Supplement Programs

All four programs that offered earnings supplements had positive impacts on the achievement of elementary school-age children. As Figure 1 illustrates, children whose parents participated in these programs had significantly higher academic achievement (as reported by parents in two of the studies, and based on both par-

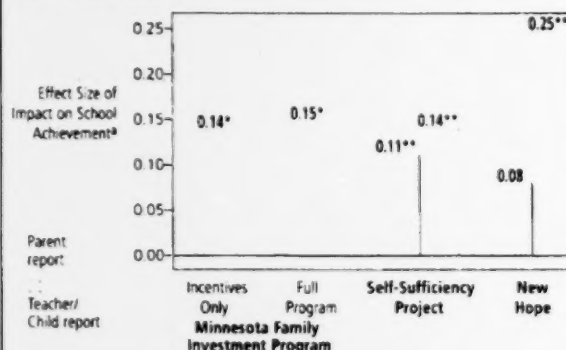
ent reports and either test scores or teacher reports in two others) than children whose parents were not offered the earnings supplements. (Each bar in the figure represents the effect, or impact, of a single program; stars indicate that the impact is significant and unlikely to be due to chance.)

Though small, the effects of earnings supplements are notable, analogous to increasing children's scores on an achievement test from the 25th to the 30th percentile. Some of these programs also improved children's behavior and health, although less consistently than they lifted academic achievement. Moreover, the positive effects on children's well-being appear to be most pronounced for children of long-term welfare recipients.³

Despite the benefits shown in Figure 1, the absolute level of children's functioning remains low, even among children whose parents participated in earnings supplement programs. Thus, while earnings supplement programs show promising effects, they clearly do not obviate the need for other interventions targeted to low-income children.

Figure 1

Programs with earnings supplements increased school achievement for school-age children in the short term.



NOTES: All measures are coded such that bars above the line indicate the program had benefits to children. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent, ** = 5 percent, *** = 1 percent (two-tailed test). *Measured as a percent of a standard deviation.

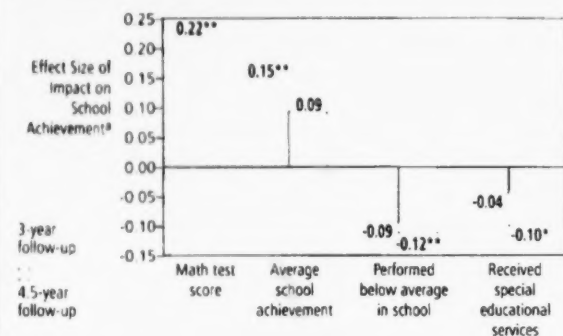
Longer-term effects

The evidence that earnings supplement programs lead to increases in children's academic achievement remains encouraging over the longer term.⁴ As shown in Figure 2, the academic gains have persisted in one of the studies for four-and-a-half years — a full 18 months beyond those registered in the follow-up interviews shown in Figure 1 — for a subset of children who were between the ages of 3 and 5 at the time of study entry.

The evidence that higher academic achievement in this earnings supplement program persists is impressive. As shown in Figure 2, the program had improved children's scores at the time of the three-year follow-up on a math skills test and raised their overall achievement as reported by their parents. Although tests were not

Figure 2

Children benefit from an earnings supplement program in both the short and long term.



At the 3-year follow-up, the program increased children's math test scores and their average achievement in school. At the 4.5-year follow-up, the program reduced the proportion of children performing below average in school and reduced the proportion of children in special education. At neither follow-up did the program affect the proportion of children repeating a grade level (not shown).

NOTES: Results are from the Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP) for children between ages 3 and 5 years at study entry. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent (two-tailed test). ^aMeasured as a percent of a standard deviation.

administered at the four-and-a-half-year point, parents who were offered the earnings supplement were less likely to report that their children were performing below average in school and receiving special educational services than were parents who did not receive the supplement. However, the program did not affect the proportion of children who had repeated a grade level in school at either point in time (not shown in the figure).

Mandatory Employment Services Programs

Programs that required welfare recipients to participate in employment services had few effects on elementary school-age children, as measured by a test of children's school-readiness skills (Figure 3). Two years after parents had enrolled in the programs, just one of six such programs produced a positive effect, as compared with all four programs with earnings supplements. Distinguishing among the various mandatory programs, few effects on children were found either among the three that required parents to participate in job search activities or among those that obligated parents to engage in educational activities. In the short term, programs with mandatory employment services also resulted in few effects across children's behavioral and health outcomes (not shown in Figure 3); the effects found were as likely to have been positive as negative.

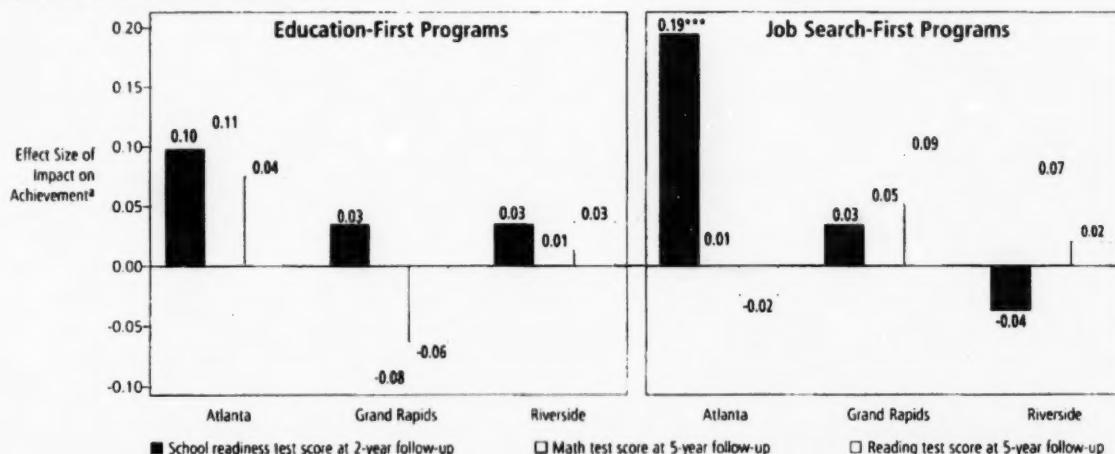
Longer-term effects

The most recent results show that, even five years after the children's parents entered the programs, mandates that increase employment but do not lift income continue to cause neither widespread benefit nor harm to elementary school-age children.⁵ As can be seen in Figure 3, none of the programs significantly affected children's math or reading performance five years after parents began their participation. With regard to other aspects of children's well-being, effects on social behavior (not shown in the figure) were more common, but these were sometimes positive and sometimes negative.

These findings may be reassuring to those concerned that requiring single mothers to go to work would have adverse consequences for their children (although the results discussed here occurred within a context of generous child care funding). At the same time, there is no evidence to indicate that children benefited when their mothers went to work, through increases

Figure 3

Programs with mandatory employment services had few effects on school-age children's achievement in both the short and long term.



NOTES: Results are from the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies (NEWWS). All measures are coded such that bars above the line indicate the program had benefits to children. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent (two-tailed). ^aMeasured as a percent of a standard deviation.

in mother's self-esteem, for example, or as a result of changes in family routines or role modeling.

Notably, the mandatory employment services programs examined here did not resort to full family sanctions to enforce compliance with their requirements. Because the programs imposed only partial grant reductions, the programs' results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to other mandatory programs whose more stringent rules may lead to more pronounced income losses. Few of the studies for this brief resulted in income loss for the average family, but some results hint that income losses may be associated with worse outcomes for children.⁶

Time-Limited Programs

States have set caps on how long welfare clients can receive benefits in a variety of ways; findings from two studies suggest that, in the right circumstances, time limits can be implemented without causing widespread harm for elementary school-age children.⁷ Both programs took a cautious approach to safeguard family well-being through various program rules and supports. Studies of both programs examined children's outcomes only shortly after the first families reached the time limit, and no short-term effects on children's achievement were found. One program demonstrated positive effects on children's behavior (although not on their health), while more limited and mixed effects were found in the other program. Though the effects documented in both studies were modest over the short term, it is not possible to draw conclusions about longer-term program effects on children.

The Interaction of Time Limits with Earnings Supplements

Are the beneficial effects observed in programs that offer an earnings supplement also to be found in programs that combine an earnings supplement with a time limit? A comparison of new findings from Connecticut's Jobs First program, which provided supplements within the context of a 21-month time limit on benefit receipt, with findings from the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which provided an earnings supplement but imposed no time limit, suggest how the two policies may interact. In both programs, participating families were offered earnings supplements through the welfare system; not all of a parent's earnings were counted in calculating the amount of welfare she could receive. For participants in the Connecticut program, this method of delivering the supplement meant that families whose income came from a mix of earnings and welfare would lose the supplemental income when they reached the welfare time limit.

The pattern of findings shown in Figure 4 suggests that programs that add time limits to earnings supplements may yield fewer benefits to children than programs with earnings supplements alone. As the figure makes clear, the Minnesota program's generous earnings supplement generated sustained gains in income both in the early and later follow-up period (left column) and had more pervasive effects on children, improving both their school achievement and behavior. In the Connecticut program, by contrast, the initial income gains were cut short by the 21-month time limit and occurred only in the first part of the follow-up period. Effects on children were more limited than those seen in

Figure 4

A program with an earning supplement alone had more pervasive benefits to children than one that combined an earning supplement with a time limit.

Effect on	Earning supplement/ no time limit	Earning supplement with time limit
	Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)	Connecticut's Jobs First program
Parents' employment and income		
Employment	+	+
Income		
Early follow-up income	+	+
Later follow-up income	+	no effect
Child well-being		
Child school achievement	+	no effect
Child behavior	+	+
Child health	no effect	no effect

Minnesota (as in other supplement programs), occurring in only one area of children's functioning, their behavior.

This comparison of results cannot conclusively explain why time limits and earnings supplements interact to produce fewer effects on children than an earnings supplement alone. There are several possible explanations. It may be that the time limit reduces benefits for children because it cuts short any income gains that families experience from the earnings supplement. Alternatively, the impending time limit deadline may add to family stress, which in turn mitigates the benefits to children. Finally, it may be that the different effects are a result of different local conditions.

FINDINGS FOR ADOLESCENTS

With concern concentrated on the effects welfare reform was having on the well-being of elementary school-age children, the responses of adolescents to changes in welfare policies (and to maternal employment more generally) have received less attention. Perhaps one reason for this relative lack of focus on older children and teens is that policymakers have assumed that welfare reform's new work requirements, time limits, and supports for working parents would be likelier to promote their successful transition into adulthood than to derail it. In particular, as community norms change in response to welfare reform, adolescents might be presumed to respond positively to strong messages of responsibility and to the presence of working parents as role models. However, less benign possibilities lurk: Increased employment could remove mothers from their supervisory roles and place counterproductive demands on youth at a crucial point in their development. For low-income adolescents — a group already at risk of poor outcomes — the stakes are high. To determine what effects welfare reform programs have on adolescent outcomes, impacts were calculated within, and then averaged across, between 10 and 16 different welfare and work programs.⁸ In each program, the adolescent

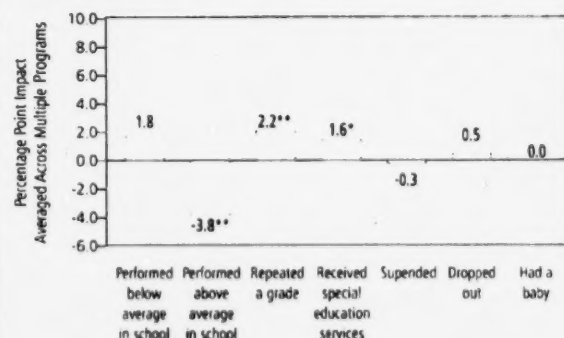
children of single parents were between approximately age 10 and age 16, and the families of nearly all of them were receiving welfare benefits when the parents' participation in the new programs began. At the time of the follow-up interviews, these adolescents were between the ages of 12 and 18.⁹

Effects of Welfare and Work Policies on Adolescents

Welfare and work policies show a clearly different, and more troubling, pattern of effects for adolescents than for elementary school-age children, as evidenced particularly by negative effects found for aspects of adolescents' progress in school, including their achievement (Figure 5). Specifically, youth whose parents participated in these programs were less likely to be performing above average in school (as reported by their mothers). The proportion of these adolescents who repeated a grade or were enrolled in special educational services¹⁰ was 2 percentage points, or approximately 10 percent, greater (an effect size of 0.06 and 0.05, respectively) than that of adolescents whose families were in the control groups, although they were no likelier to have been suspended or to have dropped out of school. In addition, these programs had no effect on rates of teen childbearing — an outcome that, along with dropping out of school, has clear implications for young adulthood.¹¹

Figure 5

Welfare and work policies for parents have small, negative effects on some aspects of adolescent schooling.



Welfare and work policies reduce the proportion of adolescents performing above average in school, increase the proportion of adolescents who have repeated a grade and the proportion in special education, but have no effect on the proportion of adolescents who were suspended, dropped out from school, or had a baby.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent (two-tailed).

Effects on Adolescents as They Become Young Adults

The adverse effects of welfare and work policies on adolescents — particularly as evidenced by grade repetition or receipt of special educational services — are small, but they are important enough to warrant policymakers' attention. Welfare reform programs may not undermine participation in school, but they do affect the aca-

demic progress of youth who are already at considerable risk of not completing school. What should be of great concern is whether these documented effects on schooling may influence the ability of youth to make successful transitions into young adulthood. Although most of the studies do not follow the adolescents long enough to provide conclusive answers, an investigation of a subset of programs that had at least five years of follow-up was used to assess effects on adolescents as they become young adults. The available evidence shows no negative effects on school completion at the time of young adulthood, even for a group of adolescents who earlier in the follow-up period had engaged in such minor delinquency as skipping school, staying out late, and increased frequency of drinking.

Maternal Employment and Effects on Adolescents

Minimizing the negative effects of future welfare reform programs on adolescent schooling requires policymakers to understand why reform programs produced negative effects in the first place. Because the programs were designed to affect parents' employment, welfare use, and income, the likeliest causes of the variations that show up in effects for adolescents are presumed to be found in differences in how the programs affected their parents. But the connection between differences in programs and effects on adolescents are not as clear-cut as the evidence suggests they have been for younger children. For the teens, positive or negative effects do not appear to cluster around one or another policy approach (earnings supplement programs, say, as compared with mandatory employment services or time limits) as they did with the elementary school-age children. Indeed, all three of these broad policy approaches can be associated with some negative effects on adolescent schooling.

What the three policy approaches share, however, is that they increased single mothers' employment through requirements to participate in employment services, time limits on welfare receipt, or earnings supplements. This suggests that negative effects on adolescents can arise irrespective of whether the single mothers' entry into employment results from a program *mandate* to work or from a *voluntary* decision to enter or increase employment. It further implies that negative effects on adolescents may not be unique to welfare reform but instead may occur for a wider range of low-income adolescents whose single parents are taking jobs.

While increases in maternal employment appear likely to have played a role in the negative effects on adolescents, negative consequences did not show up in all programs that increased employment. What might distinguish programs with adverse consequences for adolescents from those without?

There is evidence to suggest that adequate child care and adolescent supervision — needs that are generated by increased maternal employment — may play a role. In the five programs for which data on adolescents' after-school activities were available, it was found that even though all boosted mothers' employment, adolescents' participation in structured activities outside school did not increase. Previous research has shown that supervision and the

structuring of adolescent out-of-school time can positively affect schooling and social functioning. When parental supervision is reduced owing to employment, neglecting to replace it could lead to problems.

There may also be negative consequences when adolescents are expected to take on increasingly adult roles in their families. In all three programs where information on this possibility is available, adverse impacts were found. Two programs increased the likelihood that adolescents were responsible for the care of their younger siblings, and a third increased the likelihood that adolescents worked more than 20 hours per week. In in-depth interviews, single mothers of adolescents recounted in detail the extent to which they rely on their older children to take care of the younger children in the family. While these "adult" activities can introduce adolescents to important responsibilities, they could also interfere with schoolwork. Taking on adult roles can also erode adolescents' willingness to continue accepting the authority of adults such as parents or teachers.

FINDINGS FOR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

Very limited evidence drawn from the two studies that assessed effects on very young children suggests that infants and toddlers were neither harmed nor helped by welfare reform policies. In a study of an earnings supplement program that yielded the most extensive information on the youngest children, no differences emerged between program and control groups in terms of receptive language skills (that is, the children's understanding of words as measured by a standardized test) or how parents described their children's health and behavior. Limited information about the long-term effects of programs that required mothers of children of age 1 and older to participate in mandatory employment services found no systematic negative or positive effects in terms of their adjustment to school. Noteworthy in both studies was the fact that child care for children of both program and control group parents was well funded. While these preliminary indications are encouraging, data are not yet adequate to draw firm conclusions about the effects of welfare reform policies on very young children.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TANF AGENDA

It is clear from the results reported here that policies that affect families' economic circumstances have important implications for the academic success of low-income children and adolescents. The research findings examined in this brief are conclusive in demonstrating that programs that raise the incomes of working parents can improve the school readiness and academic achievement of elementary school-age children. Results for adolescents are troubling and do not yet provide a clear road map to guide the investment of public resources.

This investigation provides insights for policymakers who are considering these important questions:

Should the goals of PRWORA be expanded to include increasing family income or improving children's well-being?

The results summarized underscore the connection between increases in family income and improvements in children's well-being. An explicit recognition that the design of TANF and other policies directed toward parents can affect outcomes for their children might encourage states and localities to develop innovative methods to provide supports to working families or to improve children's well-being. If TANF's goals are expanded in this area, the results summarized here do not provide guidance on whether the precise goal should be to reduce poverty or to increase household income for a broader group of families. While there is reason to believe that families whose incomes place them farthest below the poverty line would benefit most from programs that raised their incomes, some of the benefits experienced by children in the studies examined for this brief suggest that it may also stem from income gains that occur above the poverty line.

Should earnings supplements be subject to welfare time limits?

Results presented here suggest that programs that provide generous supports for at least three years have more positive effects on children than programs with time-limited welfare policies that cut supports short. There are clear tensions between the goals of time-limited welfare policies that encourage families to leave welfare quickly and policies with generous earnings disregards for working families that recognize a need for ongoing financial support.

There are two possible ways to resolve those tensions within TANF: Suspend the time-limit clock for those who are "playing by the rules" (such as by working a specified minimum number of hours per week); or provide maximum flexibility to states who want to use their TANF funds to support working families. In particular, if earnings supplements were not defined as "assistance" in TANF regulations, they would not be subject to the five-year federal time limit.

Do other supports for working families result in the same benefits for children as earnings supplements?

At present, there is little in the data to help policymakers determine whether different kinds of work supports affect children differently. Two earnings supplement programs examined for this brief chiefly provided monthly cash supplements, while a third program offered generous child care subsidies and health coverage that could have benefited children. If in-kind subsidies (which are less flexible than cash supplements), earned income credits (typically received as lump sum payments), or policies that help parents attain higher wages and find better jobs increase families' economic security in the same way that the cash supplements studied for this brief did, these other methods to boost family income may bring similar benefits for children.

Longer-term welfare recipients appear to have benefited most from the work-support policies examined for this brief, suggesting that benefits to children may be diluted as eligibility is broadened to allow more families to take advantage of them. But it has yet

to be determined at what specific level of family income benefits for children may fade away. In most states, the supports available to working families are not as generous as the supplements offered in the programs examined for this study. Moreover, the benefits evident in the supplement studies were produced on top of the existing federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits and other relatively extensive supports for working families. Thus, in most states, there is currently scope to expand financial supports for working families and produce benefits for children.

Can time limits be implemented in ways that minimize harm to children?

That the two time-limited welfare programs discussed in this brief produced few negative effects on children does not warrant the conclusion that time limits themselves cannot have adverse results. Both programs established clear processes to protect family well-being by providing services that families approaching the time limits needed to assure adequate sources of income. Both also took steps to identify families for whom imposition of the time limit might lead to harm by reviewing their circumstances before the time-limit clock expired. It is possible that, were time limits to be implemented with fewer safeguards and to result in income loss for families, the consequences for children could be different.

What do the results for adolescents imply for investments in youth development programs and child care?

The negative effects on adolescents reported here were small and did not show up in outcomes with related to severe consequences as dropping out of school and teen childbearing. Because the implications of these results for young adult outcomes are not yet clear, it may be premature to prescribe a nationwide response based solely on these findings. Still, it is well known that low-income adolescents already fare worse in school and face more problems making a successful transition into adulthood than their higher-income peers. Viewed in that context, any new difficulties created for this group of young people that result from welfare reform programs or from increases in maternal employment should be a concern for policymakers. The most prudent course for policymakers might be to place a priority on understanding this issue further, by reinvigorating the search for effective

community-based programs to engage low-income youth both within and outside the TANF system. A good place to start would be to experiment with new approaches to engage low-income youth positively in supervised settings after school.

Note, however, that youth development programs will be of no benefit to adolescents who must care for their younger siblings because of families' poor access to child care. The results summarized here suggest that expansions in child care programs for young children may bring important benefits for another group of youngsters — their older adolescent siblings.

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Notes

¹ Morris et al., 2001.

² Gennetian et al., 2002.

³ Effects for children of shorter-term welfare recipients, who could be examined in only one study, appear to be less positive than those for children of long-term welfare recipients.

⁴ Michalopoulos et al., 2002.

⁵ Hamilton et al., 2002.

⁶ For families with children between the ages of 6 and 18, there were both losses in income and negative effects on the children at the two-year follow-up in two of the sites. At the five-year follow-up for these same sites, families of adolescents continued to show income losses and negative effects on the adolescents (Hamilton, et al., 2002). However, at the five-year follow-up, there were also income losses in two sites for families whose children were toddlers at the beginning of

the study, and no negative effects were detected for these younger children.

⁷ Bloom et al., 2001, Bloom et al., 2002.

⁸ The synthesis of adolescent outcomes includes findings from four programs — National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies-Portland program, Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN, Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Program, and Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Program Incentives Only — that were not included in the

synthesis of outcomes for elementary school-age children. For this younger group of children, no comparable in-depth information was not collected for these programs that would have permitted their inclusion in the synthesis.

⁹ To deepen understanding of adolescents' responses to welfare reform policies, quantitative impact analyses are complemented with information drawn from detailed open-ended interviews conducted between 1997 and 2001

Interviewees were mothers who received welfare and lived in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and high welfare receipt at the time the interviews began.

¹⁰ Involvement in special educational services was assessed using the reports of mothers who were asked if their adolescent child attended a special class, received special help, or was enrolled in a special school.

¹¹ There is insufficient information available across programs to draw

conclusions about average effects on other aspects of adolescent behavior, including minor delinquency, substance use, or police involvement. In the one study assessing delinquency and substance use, increases in minor delinquent behavior (such as staying out late or skipping school) and drinking were found. Four programs assessed effects on involvement with the police for comparable samples of adolescents, and an increase was found in one of them



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ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION PROJECT

This policy brief is part of the Next Generation, a project that examines the effects of welfare, antipoverty, and employment policies on children and families. Drawing on rich data from recent welfare reform evaluations, the project aims to inform the work of policymakers, practitioners, and researchers by identifying policy-relevant lessons that cut across evaluations.

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MDRC POLICY BRIEF

**Welfare Policies
Matter for
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Lessons for TANF
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